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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2443  
INFO RUCNMRC/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 001544

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC: JSHOWELL; IIP/WHA: PCOZZENS; WHA/PDA: JDICKSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OEXC](#) [OIIP](#) [SCUL](#) [AR](#) [KPAO](#) [KSUM](#) [OEXC](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: Embassy Election Night Event in Buenos Aires Reaches Over 10 Million Argentines

¶1. Summary: The U.S. Embassy's election night party attracted the widest and most positive media coverage of any Embassy event held in Argentina in recent memory. Hosted by the Embassy at the American Club of Buenos Aires on the evening of November 4 and morning of November 5, the celebration of democracy at its best included a mock vote by Argentine citizens, remarks by the CDA, a mock debate by (well-informed Argentine graduate students posing as) Obama and McCain, and a contest to guess the outcome of elections in battleground states and the total number of electoral votes garnered by the winning candidate. The impact in Argentine television, radio, Internet, and press media was substantial, allowing us to transmit a message of optimism about American democracy and the future of the bilateral relationship to an estimated 10 million Argentines. One radio station broadcast an interview with the CDA that reached 600 stations throughout the hemisphere. End Summary.

#### Election Night Elicits Massive Media Response

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¶2. Mission Buenos Aires sponsored an election night party for over 300 Argentine guests and 80 media contacts. Event participants viewed U.S. election returns on four large screens featuring CNN Espanol and CNN International. The evening's program featured remarks by CDA, who focused on the areas of cooperation our two democracies enjoy and Argentina's 25 years of uninterrupted democracy. Guests also enjoyed a mock presidential debate with two University of Belgrano students taking the role of McCain and Obama. Argentine guests were invited to vote for their presidential candidate of choice, received "I voted" buttons, and later in the evening learned that Obama won their election by a vote of two to one. Guests also participated in a contest predicting who the next U.S. president would be, how many electoral votes he would win, and which candidate would win the battleground states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

¶3. The Embassy's election night party attracted the widest media coverage of any Embassy event in recent memory. Television, radio, internet and print media chose the U.S. Embassy-sponsored event as the center of local coverage of the vote, despite the technological capability and actual television arrangements to cover the election directly from the United States. Four of the five broadcast television networks in Buenos Aires posted TV crews at the event, as did all of the five round-the-clock cable news networks. Five of these channels broadcasted live from the event to complement the news feed they were getting from the United States, and featured interviews with the CDA, other Embassy officials, and guests. The combination of these television stations reaches an audience of several million. Two popular weekly TV programs, roughly equivalent to American shows like "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," also sent their crews, taping more colorful interviews, stories and spots that will air over the coming week, promising continuous coverage. The Radio Continental network, which reaches 600 regional stations, broadcast an interview with the CDA and others at the event. (To confirm the wide reach, State Department colleagues in Bogota reported hearing the CDA's interview.) Argentina's top

"dot-com" news sites, La Nacion.com and Infobae, also posted stories and videos of the event that will be available to readers throughout November.

14. Interview questions focused on the intricacies of the U.S. electoral process, the meaning of the election results for U.S. democracy, and the election result's meaning for Latin America and Argentina. This allowed us to transmit an optimistic message on the state of our democratic process and the future of our nation's relationship with Argentina and the region to millions of Argentines.

15. The many journalists who attended the Election Night event showed no interest in the highly controversial Antonini Wilson suitcase scandal, even after the verdict of the Franklin Duran trial in Miami had dominated that morning's front pages. The CDA did not receive a single question on the trial in the approximately 20 interviews that he did on November 4 and 5.

#### The Mornings Before and After: More Media Opportunities

16. All front pages in print media were consumed by the Obama victory the morning of November 5, as intense media coverage continued. Three national newspapers carried stories and photos on the Embassy event as part of their election coverage. Three large provincial newspapers carried information released by the Embassy on "Vote Day," reporting over 3,000 US citizens had cast their absentee ballots here.

17. Also on the morning of November 5, CDA gave four consecutive radio interviews (three top radio stations and one youth-oriented station, with two of them occurring in "drive-time" when radio

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listening is at its peak) expressing U.S. pride for the massive show of democratic faith and emphasizing continued U.S. interest in the region. The Mission's Press Officer also gave a phone interview to cable news channel C5N.

18. On Election Day itself, the largest circulation paper in the country, Clarin, published an opinion piece by Ambassador Wayne drawing a comparison between the U.S. people's passion for this election and the first vote in Argentina after the 1976-83 dictatorship 25 years ago.

Comment

19. Interest in the U.S. election has been at a fever pitch in Argentina, despite this country's high rates of anti-American sentiment. Our event exploited that interest and the local media's avid coverage to convey an optimistic, positive message to millions of Argentine households. It appears that a compelling U.S. presidential election like the one that we just experienced is the best public diplomacy program we have.

KELLY